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Paying Attention to the Details

Tim Hering
Columnist

When did paying attention to the details become passé? The more we seem to know or can find out quickly, the less likely we are to place importance on the details. Our phones, tablets and computers are increasingly getting better at correcting our spelling and grammar and are even doing much of the work for us when we use talk-to-text. Are we losing the ability to do these things for ourselves?

I hate it when my name is misspelled. I get it. A herring is a fish, and it is spelled with two "R's. It has happened all my life. I spell it correctly, and it invariably comes back to me with an extra "R." I expect my name to be misspelled, but I am still irritated by it.

My identity is important to me, just as yours is important to you. When typing, it is easy to make a mistake, and autocorrect certainly isn't going to fix it for you. It is more likely that it will misspell it for you if you have spelled it correctly. Windows will invariably put a squiggly red line under the incorrect spelling, and with the ever-expanding to-do lists we all have, we may just automatically click on the correction and move on.

This is where we need to remember to pay attention to the details. We cannot rely on Windows or any of the various iPhone or Android apps to do that for us. My contact information is relatively easy to find on the Westminster network. I am a student, and my name is on numerous lists: class lists, the list of music majors, lists of the numerous musical groups to which I belong, the list of columnists for this paper, etc. The list of lists is extensive.

I have yet to find a list of names generated by the network here wherein my name is spelled incorrectly. If, for some reason, I were to travel on a plane and see my name printed out as "Herring" rather than "Hering," I would experience some difficulty boarding the plane since my name is not, in fact, Herring. As I write this, Google Docs is telling me that "Hering" is misspelled with only one "R." Things could easily go wrong just in the editing of this column.

I point this out because I have heard numerous times that I should not get upset when my name is spelled incorrectly. Over the years, I have come to accept it, and I usually do move on, correcting it if necessary but not getting too bothered by it. I have even been known to spell other people's names incorrectly from time to time. I did this a week or so ago in an email to the Chair of the Division of Communications, Arts, Languages, and Literature.

Dr. Mitchell is clearly spelled with two "L's, yet because the email system likes to truncate names and add odd assortments of other things to them in forming email addresses, I used the email address spelling rather than double-checking and paying attention to the details since I was in a hurry while emailing between back-to-back classes. How does that look when sending an email about adding a writing minor? Dr. Mitchell was understanding, but I was and still am embarrassed by such a mistake, a mistake that could have easily been avoided had I taken a moment to double check-before hitting the send button.

My name was printed incorrectly in a program for one of my recent performances—again. That will likely not be the last time this happens, but I distinctly remember correcting the spelling on a sheet that was passed around in order to avoid this very mistake. It did indeed have my name spelled incorrectly, so I expected upon fixing the error that it would be spelled correctly this time. Details matter in this case. Music is my major, and my name is important. Is it the end of the world? No, not by a long shot. But, this clearly illustrates my point. Did Windows or whatever software was used to create this program autocorrect incorrectly, or was it just an oversight? Did anyone double-check the sheet against the program before sending it off to be printed, or did we just rely on whoever typed it in the computer to type what was on the corrected sheet?

I recently saw a different program where the individual's name was spelled correctly, but his gender was changed in the description of his role. This detail matters. OK. Yes, that was amusing, and I admit that I did laugh about it, but I likely would have felt differently had it been my name. It shouldn't have happened, and it matters. Mistakes like these are mistakes. They happen, and I realize that, but little things like this do have an impact. I know in my head that that extra "R" was an oversight and not some conspiracy to drive me (further) into madness, but in a world where (cue deep movie trailer voice) we are increasingly relying on technology to take care of those little things, it is so nice to feel like someone took a little extra time to check the little details to make sure they were right.

Have you ever had someone out of the blue ask you how you are after you have had a bad day? You didn't tell them you had a bad day; they just knew, and they took a moment out of their day to see if you were OK. Little details can make a big impact. You matter. Every little detail should reflect that no matter how big or small your role in whatever it is you are doing. The details surrounding your participation matter. Take a moment to make sure the little details are in order. You never know when that may have an impact on someone else, and that is always a goal we should pursue.

A Nostalgia Crisis

Mackenzie Marino
Columnist

When I think of my childhood, I remember Disney movies with much fondness. You know the ones—*The Lion King, The Little Mermaid, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Mulan, Hercules*, and...*Pocahontas? The Hunchback of Notre Dame*?

I've found that my adult mind has viewed many of these age-old classics with rose-colored glasses, especially the last two I mentioned. *Pocahontas*, the butchering of the story of the young Native American girl who married the Englishman John Rolfe. No, not John Smith, the dreamy blond hunk, but the tobacco farmer John Rolfe. It was an arranged marriage to try to settle a war. It didn't work, like the Disney movie taught us. Nor was Pocahontas a tall, full-figured, wild woman. In fact, after she saved some of the settlers from starving in the winter, she was stolen from her husband Kocoum by Ralph Hamor to use in a bargain with Powhatan. That's a little different than what I grew up watching. Though, in the end, at least she and John Rolfe were supposedly in love—however, she still died of "English disease" at the age of twenty-one. I can't help but feel a little deceived by Disney.

In all honesty, though, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was much more shocking than Pocahontas when I sat down and watched them again as an adult. Not only does the movie contain the risque track "Hellfire," but much of the movie uses the ethnic slur "gypsy" for Esmeralda, who (it can be assumed) is Roma, or Romani. Though the Roma people are commonly known as gypsies, this is generally an unappreciated term since it is seen as derogatory. While it is a fairly decent story, I can't believe it was aimed for children to watch. Can you imagine if, in *The Princess and the Frog*, Dr. Facilier's main track was "Friends from Hell," instead of "Friends on the Other Side"? I highly doubt that parents would have been as ready to distract their children with that movie as mine were with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

This brings me to the crisis I've had—my nostalgia tends to paint my childhood experiences and memories in a fantastic, mystical, wonderful light...but now that I've gone back to recapture those good times, I find that, irrevocably, I cannot truly reclaim the happiness that I felt before.

I used the the example of Disney movies, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. Be it favorite foods of my childhood, favorite amusement park rides, board games, video games, TV shows—these things fall flat in my matured mind. Imagine going to watch *Dora the Explorer* or *Blue's Clues* right now, to pass the time. It sounds ridiculous, I know—of course you're not going to enjoy it as much as you did when you were four, and of course you're not going to feel as happy as you were when you were watching it in kindergarten!

I know that a lot of people our age tend to fall into this trap, but I do have some advice. Don't spoil the pleasant memories you have now by trying to reclaim them. Instead...go make new memories that are just as happy—make new memories that, in coming years, you will look upon with the same fondness that childhood memories are looked upon now. Continue to do that, and enjoy current memories for what they are, rather than trying to reclaim a past that is beyond our reach.

Letters to Me

Zoey Povlick
Columnist

"I wish you wouldn't worry, let it be.
I'd say have a little faith and you'll see.
If I could write a letter to me…"

Our lives are constant states of reflection. We reflect on our past work in classes, we reflect on our younger selves, and we reflect on the people we've met. The 2007 hit by Brad Paisley, Letter to Me, often plays in my head as I do this daily reflecting. We get so caught up in who we are presently that we forget where we came from, and who we are aiming to be. Sometimes in our reflection it helps to write down what we are thinking. Brad Paisley wrote letters to himself, and I think that is something we can all do to reflect on where we have been or want to go.

To me, at age 7:

Sometimes, people pick on you for your straight across bangs. Sometimes, people pick on those clothes your mom makes you. Sometimes, people pick on you for your laugh. Don't change any of it. Those things make you who you are. That might not make any sense now, but it will soon enough. Keep reading; just like Dad says, it really will make you smarter. Appreciate all of your teachers. Don't ever forget to smile. Go visit grandma every chance you get, and make sure you get her recipes for pierogis, fruit squares, and all of her soups. Go outside and plant flowers with Mom. Spend as much time on the playground as you can. Sometimes, kids are mean there. *"You'll make it through this and you'll see. You're still around to write this letter to me."*

To me, at age 13:

Those boys don't matter. Girls say petty things. I promise people grow up eventually. You grew up before them, and you can't change what has happened to you. You and Dad will make the greatest two person team to ever walk the earth. Remember that this is new to him too. Take is easy on him. Eat your vegetables, drink your milk, don't let boys be mean to you, your dad is always right. Let every experience make you stronger. Laugh when people start rumors, and just let it go. No one will remember it by next week. *"You'll make it through this and you'll see. You're still around to write this letter to me."*

To me, at age 16:

You're not invincible just because you have a driver's license and your dad has a fast car. Don't you dare make me say that again. And just because you have a driver's license doesn't mean you have to use it. Home is a really good place to be. You'll miss it when you aren't there anymore. Learn to forgive and leave the past in the past. You've really piled yourself with classes, jobs, and lessons. Do your best; it will be worth it. Remember to have some fun too. Surround yourself with people that lift you up, and don't worry about people that don't make you feel any less than the best. Don't change for anyone. Practice your instrument more. Make time to go to church with Dad. I know it's hard to get everything in, and you hardly sleep. *"You'll make it through this and you'll see. You're still around to write this letter to me."*

To me at graduation:

I told you so. I told you that you could do this, and so did everyone else. I know senior year was hard, but you deserve this. Just because some people have more medals than you doesn't mean anything. Just because you only have one person sitting in the audience for you doesn't mean anything either. Guess what? You're sitting on stage waiting to sing the National Anthem for an audience of thousands. That's a bigger accomplishment than a 4.0 anyway. These next steps on to college are scary, going out into the world without Dad, without a bank account, without owning a car… *"You'll make it through this and you'll see. You're still around to write this letter to me."*

It's okay to look back on our pasts. You can't change where you have been, but you can change where you are going. Know your past, live in the present, design your future. Every day is a chance to start over, but every yesterday is a chance to learn. No matter what you have gone through or are still going through, you'll make it through. Maybe you should try writing a letter to reflect on your past selves to help you remember how you got to where you are.